

Young People's Societies

LIFE LESSONS FROM ACTS.

Topic for Sunday, August 1: Life Lessons for me from the Book of Acts. Acts 27:18-44.

DAILY READINGS.

Monday: The need of the Spirit. Acts 1:1-8.

Tuesday: Turning to God. Acts 2:37-42.

Wednesday: God is not mocked. Acts 5:1-11.

Thursday: Spread of the seed. Acts 8:8,34-40.

Friday: A chosen vessel. Acts 9:10-19.

Saturday: An epoch-making speech. Acts 17:22-31.

The writer of the Book of Acts, Luke, the physician, the scholar, the evangelist expressly tells Theophilus, to whom he wrote, that this book is another treatise on what Jesus did and taught.

It is the second volume of Luke's narrative of Christ, the first dealing with his work in the world by his own presence and this dealing with his work through the Spirit and by the agency of his Apostles.

The title, "The Acts of the Apostles," commonly used, is a misnomer. It should rather be "The Acts of Christ Through His Apostles." Very few, indeed, of the Apostles are even so much as named in the book, except once.

The lessons to us are many and practical. The first is that we need not attempt to address ourselves to our work until we have sought God's Spirit.

Another is that in waiting on him in prayer we shall receive the preparation we need for efficiency and success in work. And concerted prayer as well as personal prayer is needful.

Another is that the simple Gospel is the power of God unto salvation, and its preaching and living the best means for spreading the Kingdom and developing the new and larger life in all believers.

Another is that fellowship with one another is always beautiful and at times needful. The community principle of the first disciples prepared them the better for the time which soon came, when persecution scattered them abroad.

Another is that God requires faithfulness on our part to one another, and looks upon the violation of truth as a sin against the Holy Ghost. Ananias and Sapphira sinned against God when they made false statements to Peter.

The Holy Ghost is a person. Only a person can be sinned against. Satan is a person. He put it into Ananias' and Sapphira's hearts to sin as they did. The recollection of the personality of the Spirit will help us to resist the personality of the devil.

The suffering of the righteous for their faith is to them an evident token, and God-given, of salvation. Stephen was accused of speaking against Moses. God made his face to appear as that of an angel, with a glory with which none since Moses had been made resplendent.

Stephen saw the Son of Man standing at the right hand of God—not sitting as everywhere else represented, but standing, as if he had risen to receive and welcome his faithful martyr. Royalty rises only to welcome royalty. Believers are joint-heirs with Christ. They are made kings and priests unto the Lord.

There is hope of even the wickedest. Saul, breathing out threatenings and slaughter, intoxicated with the blood of Stephen, regardless of whether believers were men or women, continued his havoc of the Church. God stopped him and converted him into the greatest of the Apostles.

The missionary lesson is a great one. From Joppa Jonah fled, in the vain attempt to avoid going to Nineveh, a Gentile city, to offer redemption. In the same Joppa God taught Peter to forget the distinction between Jew and Gentile. And when the vision was over the men from Cornelius, the Roman, were at the door to escort Peter to Caesarea.

That best portion of a man's life is still
His little nameless, unremembered acts
Of kindness and of love.

—Wordsworth.

Prayer Meeting

TOPIC—HOPE AND DUTY.

1 Peter 1:12-20.

For the Week Beginning July 25.

This passage is designed to enforce a truth that is concisely expressed in 2 Corinthians, where the Apostle is showing the rationality of enduring trial, "while we look not at the things which are seen, but at the things which are not seen; for the things which are seen are temporal, but the things which are not seen are eternal."

To encourage the new converts in steadfastness of faith, the writer reminds them that the prophets of old had foretold the salvation that was to be revealed and the marvelous means by which it should be provided. So wonderful was that provision that they searched with intensest interest to ascertain the meaning of those things which the Holy Spirit revealed to them and which, upon his authority, they made known. They are represented as searching to discover these truths as the miner does the precious ore that he may unearth. For four thousand years "the sufferings of Christ and the glory that should follow" constituted the great theme of revelation in manifold symbols, promises and predictions. It was an expression of the yearning of devout souls for the "desire of all nations," who, when he did appear, fulfilled all righteousness, and, having finished on the cross his earthly ministry, entered into his glory. After he ascended the Apostles bore testimony to the facts that the prophets had foretold.

The appeal that is made to us is, shall not we search diligently the inspired messages that contain such joyful assurances of a finished salvation so freely bestowed? And shall not we train ourselves to "hold fast the beginning of our confidence steadfast unto the end," that we may be obedient children, not fashioning ourselves according to the former lusts in our ignorance? With the abundant light which we have and the marvelous nature of the salvation which we have received, it becomes us to be "holy in all manner of conversation."

A warning is given against indifference to those sublime realities which engaged the profound interest of the prophets who foretold them, and are a subject of marvelous inquiry to the minds of angels. Our God is "no respecter of persons," but does and will ever "judge according to every man's work." Genuineness is a requisite to all religious profession, for the judgments of God are according to truth. We are, therefore, to pass the time of our sojourning here in fear—that is, with profound reverence for the authority of him to whom we must finally give account.

The seriousness of our relation to our sovereign God is intensified by the very fact of the surpassing excellence and glory of redemption. "Ye are not redeemed with corruptible things, as silver and gold, from your vain conversation received by tradition from your fathers; but with the precious blood of Christ, as of a lamb without blemish and without spot." The very fact of our being redeemed by the precious blood of the Son of God renders the rejection of that redemption all the more culpable. Terrible is the guilt of him "who hath trodden under foot the Son of God and hath counted the blood of the covenant wherewith he was sanctified an unholy thing, and hath done despite unto the spirit of grace; for we know him that hath said, Vengeance belongeth unto me; I will recompense, saith the Lord."

It heightens our appreciation of redemption to realize that it was not an after thought nor an expedient, but a part of the eternal purpose of God concerning us, and therefore an expression of eternal, changeless love. How small the estimate we seem at times to set on the value of our own souls, and how short-sighted the vision we have of our place in the universe of God! But he who is the author of eternal redemption "verily was foreordained before the foundation of the world, but was manifest in these last times for you who by him do believe in God that raised him from the dead and gave him glory; that your faith and hope might be in God."